THE HEART OF NIGHT WIND

A STORY OF THE GREAT NORTH WEST

By VINGIE E. ROE

ILLUSTRATIONS by RAY WALTERS

CHAPTER XXVI.

—13—

The Spirit of the East.

Company H, under Captain Donaldson, they trotted swiftly up with the quickstep of hard-trained infantry and stood in column of fours while the officers sought the head of affairs. Daily promptly sent for the young forest ranger, and in less than it takes in the telling these two keen witted Westerners, the woodsman and the soldier, were ready to grapple with the enemy. Light-marching kits were dumped upon the ground and the hard-muscled men took to the hills and the timber under quick, decisive orders. Two hours later wagons arrived with commissary supplies and the smoky, blackened valley took on a military air.

It was a Titan struggle, and it was indicative of the force that has conquered nature—the human atoms toiling in semidarkness beneath the threatening forest, choked by the smoke, flayed by the almost unbearable heat, menaced by the flames that at any moment might sweep here or there among the rocks and declivities of the uneven hills and cut off escape.

That was the great danger they guarded against—the possibility of getting hemmed in. Guards were detailed to watch the vanguards of the foe, to note the speed of the flames, the lie of the timber, the lines that were likely to go fastest, following the different growths, but in the mysterious dusk and the silence of vast mingled sounds they were impotent and each man had to take care of himself.

The mighty boom of falling patriarchs of the forest, hoary with a thousand years of age, crashing through obstructing branches, shook the earth each moment. With each such stupendous fall wealth and world-economy and prudence trembled at the sacrilege. It was a carnival of waste, a sacrifice of the gifts of God—and among all those who fought it with heart and hand and brain there was none who knew its worldwide import so well, who lamented it so keenly as the lean, brown forest rangers whose special foe it was.

"And to think a dozen miles of government trails would have prevented it!" cried the leader with an oath.

Out in the valleys beyond, the heavy smoke had obscured the setting sun entirely. Over the crest of the Coast Range it had spread up to the heavens, drifted afar on the changing wind and all the distant valley of the Willamette knew that the forest fires were burning in the hills.

The papers throughout the state told of it that day, and it awakened no more interest than would have attended the announcement of a heavier run of salmon than was usual in the Columbia.

They were too common, those fires that sported with the national wealth each year, too much a part of everyday life, and they did not know that this was to be a marker of time in the coast country.

Time was when they were unknown, these monsters of destruction—a long-past time it was, when those first forest rangers, the silent Red Men of the hills, had burned out the underbrush each year so that a pony might go anywhere unhindered.

The silent rangers had gone with the years—passed to the Hunting Grounds and the reservations, via civilization, and now the great timber had shed its dry foliage and its pitch, the little growths had sprung up season after season, the vines had crept between and a man might not penetrate the fastnesses without built trails.

So Destiny took up the land and played with it that hot, dry August.

All through the early hours of the long night they labored, dirty, blackened, tattered scarecrows of men, running here and there, digging like mad in the wide trench that was to stop the surface flames, sawing unceasingly at the towering trees, while the guards brought twenty-minute tidings of the approaching fire.

High against the dun, smoke-lighted sky the dark canopy of the East Belt whispered and moaned as if in fear, and from time to time Sandry, a haggard, grim-lipped specter of a man, lifted his bloodshot eyes toward it. It was still his own, his future of the Dillingworth, despite the tangle of Hampden's threats, the unrecorded deed and the unfinished trail of the Yellow Pines at the south, and it pulled at his heart pathetically.

There was still a stretch of almost impenetrable timber near the summit of the big ridge which must be cut through before the flames reached it, or all would be lost.

"Shall we make it, John?" asked the owner desperately of Daily, who ran by in the smoke with wet rags to tie over the mouths of the men.

"Ought to if the wind stays where it is."

It was two o'clock and that hour in the sleeping world outside when all the elements are at an ebb.

Then, all suddenly, Destiny laughed. And Destiny's laugh was a whooping wind that rose as the elemental ebb tide turned. Hell broke loose upon the land and heaven was not. Fire encompassed the world. Its increased roar changed to the thunder of the spheres. It appalled the hearts of men, stayed their hands in fright. All throughout the darkness of rolling smoke wherein they worked between the raging torrent and the East Belt that mighty voice commanded cessation.

Instantaneously, without orders, as one man where there was no communication save between those a few feet apart, they dropped their spades, their tattered blankets, their axes. They straightened from their labor, leaving the cross-cuts in the trunks. Here and there, above the solemn thunder hoarse voices began to call. It was the time to quit and they realized it instinctively.

"Out! Out! Out!" they cried to each other in the dusk. "Get out! Get out!"

Walter Sandry, working near the apex of the pushing line, saw men beginning to run past him back along the trench and the cutting. He lifted desperate eyes to the ridge whose dim crest he could see between the boles, so near had they won to victory. Only a few more big pines, a dozen saplings, a scant few yards of trench and it would be done—the long lane of safety stretched across the neck of the East Belt!

"Stop! Stop! Stop!" he cried with a great voice that came from the very depths of his lungs with borrowed power. "Stand by me, men! For God's sake stand by!"

He saw dim shapes falter, half turn toward him and start on. Again he raised his stentorian cry and flying figures halted a moment, stopped against their will by its compelling power.

"I'm Johnny Eastern, all right, but I'm going to stay! Who'll stay with me?"

Out of the dense obscurity came Collins, a huge, fantastic figure, and stood beside him without a word. In the tension of the time Sandry reached out a hand and gripped the giant's shoulder.

"A dozen men and we've won!" he cried.

He saw the halting shapes turn, gather another and another, retrace their steps and spring back into the darkness. Every man of them was western born and the taunt had gone home. He leaped himself for the handle of a saw sticking out from the hole of a 150-foot sugar pine and the whining song of the cross-cuts rose again under the dwarfing roar.

Fourteen men had heard and answered that call, and they were alone in the purgatory of heat and smoke. All the rest were running for their lives down the cleared fall toward the valley beyond the dip.

From time to time Sandry glanced upward at the increasing light. The sugar pine fell with a rending roar, and with Harris, who, he saw for the first time, had been pulling with him, he ran to the next.

He saw as he ran that one of the men, working like a fury to fell the saplings, was Murphy, who had greeted his pompous "Dillingworth" with such grinning irony in the old days.

He had a moment's vague wonder at this odd stripe of humanity that could hold such prejudice, fight with Hampden's men in savage enmity, to join their ranks later with happy irresponsibility at the call of gold, and was still willing to turn back to fight with him on death's brink, because he had returned their taunt of East and West.

One by one, in silence, in a tension that drew the skin tight on their faces they saw the last remaining monarchs fall, the kindling saplings laid on earth, the trench, much narrower and shallower, creep upward to the ridge.

Against time, against heat that scorched their bare arms and tortured their starting eyeballs, against a stifling atmosphere that drove them nearer and nearer to the earth for breath, they drew the last blade, sent the last big pine crashing toward the north.

The ridge was clear in the increasing glow.

"Now!" cried Sandry with the triumph of a general on a victorious field, "now for the ridge and over!"

But even as he dropped his saw and ran, calling his men, Collins' big voice came through the rolling smoke with the calm of finality.

"Ain't no 'over.' It's a ninety-foot drop on to hard rock beyond that ridge."

Sandry stopped in his tracks, his head cleared as if with a whiff of salt air by that call.

The men had closed in with the instinct of their kind to be together in danger, as if so the danger were lessened.

But the Easterner was undaunted.

"Then we'll take to the East Belt," he cried, "even though it is a crown fire and coming fast, I think our trench will hold it."

With all confidence he turned to the south. Instinctively the men had drawn in behind him. The neck of the East Belt was a wavering wall of flame. He whirled and glanced back along the fall and the trench. Long streamers of flame were licking across it. The half-looked-for had happened. The little bunch of fighters were hemmed in, ringed around by fire. Death faced them on every side.

Then, as the owner sent a searching look to every quarter, he sprang forward.

"Here!" he cried, "here! Into it! Every man of you. In, I say!"

At the crest of the sheer ridge an old, abandoned tunnel gaped in the gloom, a dim haven of refuge. Its mouth was overhung by vines, its recess mysterious in the blackness. Sandry sprang to its edge and turned back for the men to pass. They stood, a small, silent bunch, gazing in wordless consternation at the red canopy.

"Now how in hell did it get across the fall?" said Collins hoarsely.

But one by one they stooped and entered the small black hole in the earth. It ran backward into the ridge, scarce the height of a tall man, its floor uneven with the heaps of earth fallen from the roof since some long-forgotten prospector had carved it out.

Here for a moment they breathed more easily, standing close together, a sweating, panting, waiting mass of humanity. Sandry stood at the mouth, the last to enter. He looked out in hushed amaze at the unchained madness of the burning world. The great fire had reached its zenith. It came booming and roaring to the fall and the trench. Its sound was indescribable. The heat grew until the flesh on Sandry's arms and face rose in blisters. A sheet of flame shot sheer across the tunnel's mouth. Smoke rolled into it and here and there a gasping breath ended in a moan. There was no air to breathe. Like trapped animals the men jumped here and there, feeling for an opening, a crevice to crawl into, away from the agony of heat and suffocation. And then they lost control of themselves.

"My God" cried Murphy shrilly, "I can't stand it! Let me out an' I'll die an' get it over!"

He came groping to the entrance, facing the increasing heat. His face was a madman's, his mouth open, his fingers crooked like talons. But at the mouth, that was as the gate of hell, he met the Easterner, a straight figure against the light beyond.

"No," said Sandry sternly, "go back and lie down."

"What?" he shrieked, "what? You damned Johnny! You tenderfoot! I'll—" And he flung himself forward. A smooth, black muzzle came forth and pushed its brazen menace into his face.

"I'll shoot the first man that attempts to pass me," said Sandry hoarsely.

Raving and cursing, he backed away.

More than one of the fourteen begged to be allowed to pass, and one of the lumberjacks from Sacramento muttered deliriously of calling his bluff. But the awful moments dragged by and Sandry stood at the entrance. The flames passed all measurement of light and heat. He lost sight of the figures at his feet. He felt himself going out in the darkness.

"S'letz," he muttered, "little S'letz—"

When he came to himself again, men were crawling across him. He could breathe better and the light had lessened. He sat up, wincing at the moving of his scorched skin over the muscles underneath, crawled out with the rest and one by one they rose to their feet. The great timber of the East Belt farther down stood serried and green. The effort had not been in vain. The holocaust was checked, the Belt was safe.

Back toward the north stretched a forest of tall, black spikes, picked out here and there by heavy spots of fire

Collins' Big Voice Came Through the Rolling Smoke.

where fallen logs, dry and pitch-laden, burned steadily. The green canopy was gone, every vine and bit of brush, every sapling and fern. Only a thin edge still crackled and snapped with streamers of flame along the trench.

"Mr. Sandry," said Harris, the sawfiler, "if you're an Easterner I hope to God the breed fills up the country!"

He extended a hand which Sandry grasped.

"An' me," said Murphy, his grimy features distorted in an expression of mingled gratitude and contrition, "I take it all back—every damn word I ever said against you, an' it's a long list."

"Forget it," said Sandry. He was no longer Johnny Eastern. He had won his right to live and fight among them.

"Is it over, Collins?" he asked, steadying his voice.

"Over? Look yonder. Feel th' wind. It's changin' again. Th' fire's backcrawled toward the Siletz basin three miles, I'll bet, while we've ben savin' this end. We've only begun to fight."

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Shot in the Hills.

At camp they met a party, headed by the foreman, just starting out in search of them. Their absence had been discovered only when Daily, coming in from the north, where his work had been laid out, had asked for Sandry.

At sight of him the three women standing together at the foot-log gave evidence, each in her way, of those emotions which the suspicion of his fate had stirred.

On Ma's face was an unbounded pride that he had come through, a man of parts, abundantly able to care for himself among a hardier crew. On Miss Ordway's there lay a vast relief, while Siletz played with the collar of her blue shirt with trembling fingers and moistened her dry lips.

Sandry turned and looked up at the darkened east with a profound joy. He swept his eyes north to where the red heaven flared and staggered to his office.

"Three hours, ma," he croaked in a voice of warning, "only three hours sleep for all of us. If you give us longer I'll never forgive you."

It was true, as Collins said, that they had only begun to fight.

Through the hours, days, nights that followed the saving of the East Belt they took no note of time. Up along the blackened, devastated valley the soldiers moved their camp. Ma Daily shut the cook-shack and suborned a wagon to haul her big range up and deposit it alongside the camp stoves of Company H, where she dispensed coffee to her men and all others with impartial zeal. Miss Ordway, her skirts tucked up from the contamination of the burned earth which rose in hot, black puffs at every moving foot, was compelled to help if she would hold that espionage over Siletz from which she hoped to realize her ambition. A bitter hatred sharpened her blue eyes upon the girl, and she ached to seize her and tear out of her blouse that packet of proofs. She was angered at herself that all her cleverness had failed to recover them before this.

So the hours passed with smoke and heat and a sun like a copper shield. Men came and went in relays, sleeping upon the ground for short shifts, rigidly apportioned and observed. The flood of flame, runner after an arrant wind, had piled its forces in leaping billows in among the northern hills. It seemed a thing of irresistible might, but the tollworn men hung to its flank with a dogged persistence, emboldened and encouraged by the success on the east ridge.

Sandry, limping painfully, and haggard as a ghost, stuck with the vanguard despite Ma's commands and Daily's warnings. At each fresh sight of his face the girl Siletz was wrung with anguish. It seemed as if he could bear no more and yet the spirit in him drove him on.

Once she ventured a timid protest.

"What is the timber worth if you die?" she asked plaintively, and Sandry, still somewhat of a boy, parried the yearning question.

"Who would care?" he laughed wryly, "would you, Little Squaw?"

The girl did not answer, but as she turned away the ready mist sprang to her eyes and he reached a contrite hand to her shoulder.

"Forgive me! I know you would!"

It seemed to Siletz as the horror swept north and the men were lost for hours in the dim fastnesses, that something was about to happen.

She felt a prescience of disaster which Coosnah shared, and they two stood apart for long spaces of time, silent, listening, the muscles of each drawn taut. From time to time the great mongrel would squat upon his haunches, lift his heavy muzzle toward the dun-smoke heavens and bay with a long-drawn, silver note that was the very acme of melancholy.

And then came a dawn when no one came in for breakfast, when the sun, coming over the ridge to the east, was not visible. Only a pale light turned the heavy canopy to shadowed pearl. The three women waited in that silence which ever attends the waiters for men who face danger. They were used to the silence, for there was no accord between them. Ma Daily had long ago shut this "bird o' th' earth" out of her good heart and Siletz hated her with the fury of the woman whose mate is threatened.

At last a solitary Indian came down the valley, running, his mouth full of excitement and dolorous prediction. The whole of the Siletz would go. It was the wrath of the Great Spirit turned loose upon a wicked world. It was the judgment. There was nothing like it. He fell into jargon and reverted to the ancient gods, and Siletz checked him sternly.

"What do you mean, Quanna?" she said, "have you forgotten the Preacher and the Bible? There is only one God and he holds us in the hollow of his hand. It is not the destruction of the world. It will stop. What more has happened, and where is Sandry of the camp?"

Everything had happened. The whole country was afire. Not only a ridge or two, a valley in between, as it had been here, a day, two days back, but ridge after ridge, valley after valley—the world, the earth, the heavens. Sandry was somewhere up behind the Hog Back.

For a moment the girl looked out across the slough, lying like a dirty ribbon between its gray and wilted banks. Then she turned troubled eyes to the general.

"Mother," she said, "I know it now. There's danger to Sandry, and I'm going."

"Child, you're wrong this time. Sandry's a man. Well as you know th' hills I can't let you go. I forbid it."

They faced each other a moment while Siletz tossed back her braids and tightened her belt.

"I'm going," she said quietly. Ma Daily, who had raised her, said no more; but as she turned to the stove aimlessly—as was her wont in every time of trial, there was a deeper line about her tremulous old mouth.

Swift as the wind the girl ran down the valley toward the deserted camp. Miss Ordway watched her and against

She Felt a Prescience of Disaster Which Coosnah Shared.

her will, drawn by some subtle excitement, some urging power, she, too, gathered her skirts and began to run across the puffing ashes. At the lean-to she came upon the other just leading out Black Bolt, a shining beauty, eager for the turf.

"I'm going too," panted Poppy, reaching for a bridle that hung behind the bay.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

FIND BY-PRODUCT OF VALUE

Chemists Are Now Extracting Wax From the Refuse From Process of Sugar Refining.

More and more of the residues of industrial processes that used to be thrown away are being found to contain some useful substance. In some cases the value of what was originally considered a "by-product" has come to exceed that of the primary product itself. The residues of sugar refining have been discovered to contain a valuable waxy substance in sufficient quantities to warrant its extraction on a commercial scale.

When a section of sugar cane is examined under the microscope it is seen that from the epidermis exude little protuberances, straight or curved and disposed perpendicularly to the surface. These are made of wax, which, with other waxy substances contained in other parts of the plant, passes into the juice in the process of its extraction.

The lime used in almost all refineries carries them away in the refuse of the precipitation process, from which the idea of rescuing them was not long ago broached.

For this purpose the slimy residue is placed in a receptacle, where it undergoes a fermentation which destroys the fatty matters without attacking the wax. The substance is then dried in the sun and afterward in a current of warm air or in a furnace. The dry product is crushed and treated with benzine or carbon disulphid. The wax thus obtained is then refined by being extracted anew with petroleum essence, and then by filtration through clay or animal black. The residue of this extraction may be utilized as a lubricant or treated to obtain the sugar which it still contains.

Cane wax thus obtained is white or pale yellow. It much resembles in appearance Carnauba wax, as also in its hardness and high melting point. The dried slimy residue contains ten to twelve per cent of it—a sufficiently large proportion to justify the industrial treatment of these residues.

English Lawns as War Maps.

It is often difficult to comprehend from a small map the significance of different movements and the strategic value of certain positions in the present European war, because of the vast territory involved. Seeking to get around this difficulty, several English lawns have been experimentally converted into large scale, open air maps. On these huge plats one can actually stroll up and down the "firing line," observe how close one's position is to that of the enemy, and, in general, gain a comprehensive idea of progress in warring operations. Small national flags mark the positions each country's armies occupy and the towns are indicated by small posts, also appropriately flagged. Colored tape, staked down at intervals, shows the location of rivers, and small stones set in the sod spell out names of the various districts.—Popular Mechanics Magazine.

His Part.

Officer—"Your horse seems very familiar to me, Higgins." Private—"I don't wonder, sir, seeing the times he brought you from the club. Why, you've kissed 'im before you went up the stairs."

RANCHING

Cattle and Horse Ranching in Western Canada — Steers Brought 10 Cents a Pound on the Seattle Market.

That big money is made by the large cattle rancher in Western Canada, and also by the small farmer as well, is shown by the undisputable facts presented from time to time. A rancher, near Gleichen, Alberta, who commenced in a small way nine years ago, recently disposed of 1,243 cattle at a total of $101,304.50, and this was only his surplus stock for the present season.

A December shipment of 217 head of ranch steers brought the owner an average of over $80 per head. They were taken straight from the range without any grain feeding and were in excellent condition to be sold for the Christmas trade. Another shipment of 100 head, averaging $70 each, was made to Seattle. The highest price paid on the Seattle market was for an Albertan steer, which weighed 1,700 lbs., and brought the fancy price of 10c per lb., or $170.

Six carloads of live stock from ranches 65 miles from Pincher, Alberta, shipped to Spokane, excited keen competition there on account of their exceptional quality. The price realized was $10,028. American dealers say they must look to Canada for beef supplies.

A livestock firm, which has shipped over 2,000 head of beef cattle to the American farmer since the middle of November, reports a splendid reception of Alberta stock in the United States.

A carload of choice Alberta steers were sold early in January for shipment to the British Columbia coast at $6.70 per 100 lbs. and, later on, a lot from Carstairs brought $6.90—the highest price paid since the spring of 1915. Shipments from Calgary livestock yards during 1915 were: Horses, 8,675; cattle, 30,577; hogs, 144,515; sheep, 12,410. A course in agriculture and livestock demonstration which has been conducted by the Provincial Dept. of Agriculture here was well attended, showing the interest taken by city residents in agricultural progress.

John Young, of Sidney, Man., gives his experiences in sheep-raising as follows, as quoted in a local paper:

"I bought a bunch of fifty ewes, which cost me $262.50. With this little flock I demonstrated just what can be done in the sheep business. This fall I sold fifty fat lambs at $6.50 per head, $325, and 18 of the best ewe lambs, which I kept, I value at $8.00 per head, $144. The wool sold at an average of $2.07 per head, $103.50. This makes the very nice total of $572.50."

"They ran out nearly every day all winter. The value of hay and oats was small, and one can make them very comfortable through the winter with very little expense. For shelter I have a shed, about 125 feet long and 14 feet wide, which I cover with straw. This gives them protection from the cold winds; yet it is always cool enough to be healthy."

"I intend going in more for sheep this fall, as I believe them to be the most profitable stock on the farm."

Desire of farmers and ranchers to increase their sheep holdings is indicated by the sale of 2,500 head recently at $9.00 each. High wool prices and profitable demand for mutton are the reason given for such a figure.

Manitoba sheep breeders arranged last year for the Provincial Department of Agriculture to handle their wool output on a co-operative basis and obtained most satisfactory results. About 75,000 lbs. of wool were handled, netting the shippers over 25c per lb.—Advertisement.

Sensational Reporter.

It occurred in one of the gambling dens of the far West, such as are only to be found in films and fiction. As the croup of cow punchers lost or won huge fortunes on the turn of a pack of greasy cards, a newcomer burst excitedly into the place.

"Heard about Dickson getting shot?" he gasped to his astonished audience.

The cow punchers gathered round him to hear the news.

"No!" they cried. "When?"

"Bout half an hour ago," came the reply. "I was there and saw it all."

"Where did he get shot?" was the next question flung at him, while hands tightened ominously on revolver butts.

"Down at the store," chuckled the jester, calmly. "He bought a couple of pounds of it."

Pessimistic Logic for the Season.

In almost every family there is one member who simply has to work hard and save his money, in order to have it on hand to lend to the others when they need it, and who thus gets the reputation among them of being stingy.—Ohio State Journal.

"Mother" of Vinegar.

"Mother" of vinegar is so called because it is the mass of germs which produce the vinegar from the alcohol of the hard cider. The "mother" can be dissolved in strong oxidizing agents, but will be killed by such treatment.

Wise "Don't."

Don't knock a man who is "making good." About 999 times out of a 1,000 the success of a man is also success for the entire community.—Atchison Globe.